



East Norriton PCE Site Assessment Montgomery County, Pennsylvania



– Private Drinking Water Well Testing –

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY - REGION 3

DECEMBER 22, 2004

The East Norriton PCE Assessment

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), along with the East Norriton Township, Montgomery County Health Department (MCHD) and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP), have started an immediate response to address chemical contamination found in groundwater and private residential wells in the Rahway Avenue area of East Norriton, Pennsylvania.

Perchloroethylene (PCE or “perc”) is the contaminant of concern found in the well water.

Questions and Answers

What is PCE, and how is it used?

PCE is an ingredient used in dry cleaning processes and machine degreasers.

What levels of PCE have been found in private water wells?

So far, 28 home wells have been tested. Results from those wells range from non-detect (zero), to about 1120 parts per billion (ppb).

What is the Safe Drinking Water Act standard for PCE?

EPA’s safe drinking water Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for PCE is 5 parts per billion (ppb).

Is the private well water safe to drink, cook with, and shower in?

Health advisories recommend drinking bottled water until the contamination is addressed. However, using well water for showering, dish washing and cooking should be fine, as long as the cooking water is not ingested. For example, if you are cooking condensed soups, use bottled water.

Is the public water supply affected?

No. Municipal water companies routinely test water supplies. Municipal water meets all federal safe drinking water standards.

How did you find the contamination?

Montgomery County passed a rule that any new well must be tested for organic volatiles, such as PCE, in addition to the previously standard testing for bacteria and coliform.

Can’t I make the water safe to drink by boiling it first?

No. It is not recommended. Please use bottled water for consumption.

What is the source of the contamination?

It’s not clear where the contamination is coming from. Agencies will work together to investigate possible sources, after first taking measures to protect public health.

Can we be put on public water?

Extending the public water line is a possible option to solve the problem in the future. However, installing water lines will take time. The quickest and most effective way to avoid possible health risks is to use bottled water for now, until a permanent solution is put in place.

Can my pets drink the water?

Yes. The water should not pose health risks to pets or livestock.

Protecting Public Health is our #1 Priority

EPA, MCHD and PADEP are taking immediate steps to protect the public's health, while possible long-term solutions to the problem are examined.

Immediate Next Steps

Step 1: Provide bottled water. Health advisories recommend those with affected private drinking water wells to start using bottled water, if you have not already. EPA will be distributing bottled water, free of charge, to affected homes in the Rahway Avenue area.

Step 2: Identify all homes in the Rahway Avenue area with private drinking water wells. EPA and PADEP are contacting property owners in this area to test their wells for contamination, and to provide bottled water.

Step 3: Investigate. Further investigation is needed in order to understand the extent and origin of the contamination. EPA will work closely with the township, MCHD, PADEP and other health experts such as the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

For More Information

EPA will continue to update the community as work progresses. If you have additional questions about this project, please contact one of the agency representative listed below.

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